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INFO RUCNMER/MERCOSUR COLLECTIVE
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RUEHPH/CDC ATLANTA GA
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF HHS WASHDC
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASUNCION 000107

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PA
SUBJECT: YELLOW FEVER UPDATE

Classified By: Michael J. Fitzpatrick; reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (SBU) Paraguay now has seven confirmed cases of yellow fever. Of 66 additional suspected cases, 25 have been ruled out; seven resulted in deaths. The GOP had 800,000 vaccines available last week, and an additional 750,000 will be arriving in country shortly from Peru and PAHO. The USD 50,000 associated with the Ambassador's February 15 disaster declaration is being used to purchase equipment and reagents for laboratory analyses and to monitor the vaccination process.

¶2. (SBU) The GOP's primary deficiencies in dealing with the outbreak relate to its communications strategy and its failure to focus vaccines in affected areas. Public protests continued February 18 and 19, with demonstrators blocking roads and burning cars and tires in and around health centers in Asuncion February 19. Emboffs report that some persons waiting for the vaccine have been asked to pay to maintain their place in line; others have been asked for their names and political party affiliations (presidential elections are April 20). The GOP is caving to public demands for the vaccine and is mounting a mass vaccination campaign in Asuncion instead of focusing the campaign in outbreak areas outside of Asuncion, where the risk of contracting the disease is higher. A U.S. Navy Medical Research Institute (NAMRID) epidemiological team believes the outbreak is primarily selvatic yellow fever, which has not yet urbanized.

¶3. (SBU) Via coordination with the Peruvian Embassy, Post has arranged for the delivery of 200 vaccines for the remaining Embassy employees (direct hire and LES) and family members who have not yet been vaccinated. The Foreign Ministry has also offered vaccines to all personnel of diplomatic rank (not A & T) in country. Post continues to update the American community via warden messages regarding where they can obtain the vaccine and information on yellow fever.

¶4. (C) COMMENT: In this increasingly political pre-election season, the GOP's handling of this crisis is being used to curry and sway political favor. If the Duarte administration does not succeed in stopping this epidemic (and soon), the opposition will not miss its opportunity to point out this Colorado failing and reap the benefits of the political fallout. END COMMENT.

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